2008-09

Graduate Conducting Recital

Spring Returns

University of Toronto Women's Chorus

Teresa Tang
Conductor

Edward Moroney
Accompanist

Robert Cooper C.M.
Music Director

March 31, 2009 (Tue) 5pm
Church of the Redeemer

University of Toronto Women's Chorus
Teresa Tang, conductor
Edward Moroney, accompanist

Kasar Mie La Gaji	Alberto Grau (b.1937)
Te Quiero	Alberto Favero (b.1944) / arr. Liliana Cangiano *Adanya Dunn, soprano;* *Tessa Talbot-Laengert, soprano*
Rise Up, My Love, My Fair One	Imant Raminsh (b.1943) *Luisa Cornacchia, viola*
Sakura, Sakura	Trad. Jap./ arr. Dwight Okamura *Tessa Talbot-Laengert, soprano;* *Jingbai Li, soprano*
Psalm 23	Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Mass No. 6	György Orbán (b.1947) Kyrie Gloria Sanctus Agnus Dei
Salmo 150	Ernani Aguiar (b.1949)

Spring Returns

Let us express our longing for spring's return with the choral piece **Kasar mie la Gaji** (The Earth Is Tired). It is written by Venezuelan-Spanish choral conductor and composer Alberto Grau in 1990 calling for "an international mobilization to save the earth" and environmental awareness. The text of the entire piece is based on the repetition of one short phrase in African Sahel dialect -- Kasar mie la gaji, which means "the earth is tired". Sahel is Arabic for "shore" – the southern boundary of the Sahara desert, which is likened to a sea.

Kasar mie la gaji is originally written for unaccompanied mixed chorus. In this evening's programme, we shall hear an arrangement to four part women's chorus by Alberto Grau himself. It is dedicated to Maria Guinand, another famous Argentinean conductor and educator. The work is an example of quasi-minimalism. The structure of the piece can be easily identified through the textual changes and tempo changes. It starts with a slow introduction which portrays the weariness of the earth, followed by a fast-slow-fast tripartite form.

The use of Latin American dance rhythm is evident throughout this piece, with the infusion of body percussion like clapping and stomping to portray the frustration towards environmental problems as a result of inconsiderate human activities. Desperation and weariness of the earth is expressed through glissando and steady repetition of the text, melodic and rhythmic motives. Singers are also required to imitate the sound of wind to depict the desolate landscape. Clusters of seconds, which characterize Grau's choral music, are used to create tension. It also acts as a symbol of protest, imbalance and destruction.

Grau was in residence as the Michael and Sonja Koerner Distingush Visitor in Composition during the 2008-2009 season at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto.

Perhaps God's beauty is most available to us through love. Our programme continues with a choral arrangement of a love song by Liliana Cangiano, entitled **Te Quiero** (I adore You). Despite its folk character, it is an original song composed by Alberto Favero, an Argentinean composer of popular music. It is based on a moving poem of Mario Benedetti (b.1920), one of the best known poets from Uruguay. Benedetti's solidarity with the Latin American people and the sincerity with which he expresses the social, political, and economic problems of the continent have won him world-wide recognition.

Te Quiero is about people who live fearlessly in an oppressed country. They are guarded by their own true love, and they know that they are not alone. They scream rebellion, and yearn for a better future.

Te Quiero

If I adore you, it is because you are my love,
my intimate friend, my all;
And in the street, arm in arm, we are so much
more than two.

(Solo)
Your hands are my caress,
my daily affirmations.
I love you because your hands
work for justice.

Your eyes are my lucky charm
against misfortune.
I adore you for your gaze that looks to
and create the future.

Your mouth is yours and mine,
your mouth is never mistaken:
I love you because your mouth knows how to
cry out for rebellion.

(Solo)
And for your sincere face and wandering spirit
and your weeping for the world –
because you are the people, I love you.

And because our love is
neither famous nor naïve,
and because we are a couple that knows
we are not alone.

I want you in my paradise,
Which is to say, in my country;
I want the people to live happily
Even though they aren't allowed to!

In our suffering and pain, we keep searching. The end of the rainbow is always just around the corner, or is it? "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing birds has come..." Canadian-Latvian composer Imant Raminsh soothes our soul with his lovely setting of the well-known text, ***Rise Up, My Love, My Fair One***, from the Song of Solomon. It is there in the sun, the sky, the ocean, the trees and flowers that we see glimpses of God's glory.

Written for treble voices, this piece is highly lyrical with long melodic lines. The rich harmonic palette together with the indispensable solo viola adds to the work a special uniqueness in colour and presence. This setting was commissioned by the Lyons Township High School Treble Choir of La Grange, Illinois.

Rise up, my love, my fair one

Rise up, my love, my fair one,
and come away.
For lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over, and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of thesinging of birds is come,
and the voice of the turtle
is heard in the land.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
O my love, who art in the clefts of the rock,
in the secret places of the stairs,
let me see thy countenance,
let me hear thy voice;
for sweet is thy voice,
and thy countenance is lovely.

(From the "Song of Solomon", Chapter 2,
Verses 10-12 &14, New King James Version)

Sakura, Sakura or "cherry blossom" is a traditional Japanese folk song depicting the arrival of spring, the season of sakura. It was first composed during the Edo period for children learning to play the koto -- a traditional Japanese stringed musical instrument derived from the Chinese zither (Guzheng), and has been popular since the Meiji period. Throughout the ages there have been many rearrangements of the song.

To celebrate spring's return, we shall hear an especially challenging and atmospheric arrangement of Sakura, Sakura by Dwight Okamura. A 6-minute 'theme and variations' based on the folk tune Sakura, Sakura, this 4-part a cappella version is written for the San Francisco Girls Chorus in 1995 and has become one of the important pieces in the women's chorus repertoire. On top of the lyrical folk tune, singers are called upon to imitate the sound of wind and to recite haiku (a form of Japanese poetry) to depict different images in spring when sakura blossoms.

Okamura is an active orchestral pianist and has composed numerous commissioned works, as well as many commissioned arrangements for the San Francisco Girls Chorus.

Sakura, sakura

Sakura, sakura
Cherry blossoms April brings,
Up against the clear blue sky.
Mist-like petals gently sigh,
Fill the air with signs of spring.
Come with me, come with me,
See the sweet cherry trees bloom.

God offers hope, and He helps us find it in times of grief and despair. **Gott ist Mein Hirt**, (The Lord Is My Shepherd), or **Psalm 23**, was composed by Franz Schubert in December 1820 using a German text translated from the Hebrew by Moses Mendelssohn, philosopher, scholar and grandfather of Felix Mendelssohn. It was composed for a soirée (evening party) given in Vienna for four musical sisters, Anna, Barbara, Katharina and Josephine Fröhlich. Anna taught singing at the Vienna Conservatory, and the soirée was for her singing pupils. Set for women's quartet, the serenely lyrical melody and expressive chromatic harmony flawlessly reflect the mood and drama of the text. The vocal lines are sensitively supported by a flowing keyboard accompaniment which reveals Schubert at his lyrical finest. This work was later performed a number of times as an examination piece for quartets of conservatory students and became one of the most popular Psalms in Schubert's time.

The Lord is my shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd
therefore can I lack nothing.
He shall feed me in a green pasture
and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.
He shall convert my soul and bring me forth
in the paths of righteousness, for his Name's sake.
Yea, thou I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table before me
against them that trouble me,
thou hast anointed my head with oil,
and my cup shall be full.
But thy loving-kindness and mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

(Based on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer)

Contemporary composer György Orbán was born in 1947 in the Romanian province of Transylvania and emigrated to Hungary in 1979. He is a prolific composer and is currently Associate Professor of Composition at the Liszt Perenc Academy of Music in Budapest. Composed for the Angelica Girls' Choir of Budapest, **Mass No. 6** is a delightful choral gem in praise of God. The work opens with a poetic and beautiful Kyrie. The harp-like piano part, which is not only technically challenging but also crucial to the setting of mood, depicts the continuous pleading to God. A dramatic Gloria featuring mixed meters and youthful rhythm follows. Orbán, in fact, wrote the Gloria first with the intent of following it with a complete mass. Sanctus is a luminous canon whereas Agnus Dei explores the beauty of simplicity. This work was commissioned by the North Central American Choral Director's Association and premiered at the NCACDA Convention, Madison, Wisconsin by the Angelica Girls' Choir in 2000.

As a conclusion to this evening's concert, we summon the voices of music in praise with Brazilian composer, choral conductor, and musicologist Ernani Aguiar's fiery setting of ***Salmo 150*** (Psalm 150). Composed in 1993, this work features rhythmic backgrounds with rapid articulations and has become very popular among choral conductors worldwide.
Ernani Aguiar studied under various composers and conductors in South America and later in Europe, including Sergiu Celibidache. As a musicologist, he has specialized in the revising, editing, and revival of works by composers of the 18th century Minas Gerais School. He has written a number of instrumental pieces, but is famous for his choral pieces. He is currently a professor of music at the University of Rio de Janeiro, a fellow of the Villa-Lobos Institute, and a member of the Academia Brasileira de Música.

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty firmament!
Praise Him for His mighty acts;
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the lute and harp!
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!
Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with crashing cymbals!
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord!

(New King James Version)

We thank God for creation – for every tree and flower, river and ocean, everything we take for granted everyday.

Programme notes by Teresa Tang

University of Toronto Women's Chorus

Soprano 1
Patricia Nesci
Andrea Van Pelt
Kelly Semkiw
Deborah Grimmet
Tessa Talbot-Laengert
Sarah Moore
Jingbai Li
Laura Widgett
Jordan Robbins
Adanya Dunn
Rachelle Luk
Sahlia Wong
Gala Castanos

Soprano 2
Ainslie Drew-Brook
Ann Chau
Katelyn Syri
Grace (Byel) Kim
Pam Lum
Julie Kim
Ema Rose Craci
Sasha Chaplygina
Jialiang Zhu
Pinky Luk
Anna Sharpe
Amanda Chan
Emily Snellings
Morgan MacNeill

Alto 1
Jessica Turje
Cristina Hare
Florence Mak
Andrea Yau
Bogdana Verbenko
Barbara Lica
Caitlyn Butler
Jennifer Wlodarczyk
Valentina Sadouskaya

Alto 2
Michelle Dussard
Sandy Huang
Danbee Moon
Jennifer Li *
Emma Young
Jamie Kang
Maria Jung
Sabina Kim
Jodie Lee
Petya Stavreva

** Choir Manager*

Special thanks to

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Luisa Cornacchia
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Prof. Gillian Mackay
Edward Moroney
Dr. Doreen Rao

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Church of the Redeemer
University of Toronto Women's Chorus
and all graduate conducting fellows

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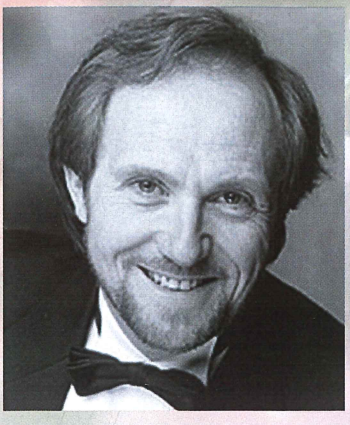
(in alphabetical order)



One of Canada's foremost choral conductors, ***Robert Cooper C.M.*** is currently Artistic Director of Chorus Niagara, Orpheus Choir of Toronto, the Opera in Concert Chorus, and the Faculty of Music Women's Chorus, University of Toronto. Cooper had the honour of conducting the National Youth Choir of Canada, made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1997 for a Celebration of Canadian Choral Music and has adjudicated the international choral competition Let The Peoples Sing on many occasions. He has conducted symphony orchestras in Halifax, Winnipeg, Edmonton and London (ON), opera companies in Victoria, Ottawa and Winnipeg, leading choirs across Canada, as well as Toronto Operetta Theatre and Opera in Concert. Acknowledged as an innovative programmer, Cooper has also commissioned and premiered many new works by both Canadian and international composers.

Cooper recently left CBC Radio Two after 31 years of bringing fine choral music and operatic performances to all of Canada as Executive Producer of Opera and Choral Music. He has served as President of the Ontario Choral Federation and the Association of Canadian Choral Conductors and presently serves on the Board of Directors of Chorus America. Robert Cooper is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from Brock University for his significant contribution to the Canadian choral community and is a member of the Order of Canada.

Edward Moroney teaches at St. Michael's Cathedral Choir School, is an organist of the Cathedral and of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Toronto. He is the accompanist for the U of T Women's Chorus and the Orpheus Choir of Toronto. Throughout forty years as an accompanist, he has played for many ensembles in concerts, on tours and for radio broadcasts, principally with the Toronto Mendelssohn Youth Choir whom he also accompanied for two CD recordings, the Ontario Youth Choir, University Voices, Opera in Concert Chorus and the Canadian Opera Company. Moroney holds degrees in composition and vocal music education from the University of Toronto, where he studied with John Beckwith, Oskar Morawetz, Derek Holman, Lloyd Bradshaw and Douglas Bodle. He was an organ pupil of Victor Togni and is a former organ-scholar of St. Chad's College, Durham University (UK). Moroney is an FRCCO (CHM), and a fellow of several UK music colleges. He was the first accompanist of the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus (1970), the first winner of the Leslie Bell Choral Conducting Scholarship (Ontario Arts Council) in 1973, and is the occasional organist of H.M. Chapel Royal of the Mohawks (Bay of Quinte, Ontario). In 2002, Moroney was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (Canada).

Teresa Tang is pursuing her Masters degree in Conducting at the University of Toronto under the mentorship of Doreen Rao, Lori-Ann Dolloff, Robert Cooper, and David Briskin. She was the Assistant Conductor of the University of Toronto MacMillan Singers in 2007 and is currently the Assistant Conductor of the University Women's Chorus. Tang holds a Bachelor of Music from McGill University where she studied piano with Marina Mdivani, Tom Plaunt and Zabel Manoukian. She was on the Dean's Honour List at McGill and holds a Licentiate Diploma in Piano Performance from the Trinity College of Music, London. Tang is a two-time recipient of the meritorious University of Toronto Fellowship and the Hong Kong Children's Choir Education Scholarship.

Prior to her studies at the University of Toronto, Tang was a producer at the Radio Television Hong Kong (Radio 4 – Classical Channel). Her published recordings include the Huang Zi Choral Literature Collection and Hymns of Universal Praise CD series. She held conducting post with The Hong Kong Children's Choir and has been guest conductor of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Choir.

Tang served as music consultant in the Programs for the Gifted and Talented under the Faculty of Education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2006. She has conducted choral workshops for Soundstreams Canada and is an active member of the International Federation for Choral Music and the Ontario Registered Music Teachers' Association.

Luisa Cornacchia is currently completing her third year of undergraduate studies in Viola Performance and Composition at the Faculty of Music at University of Toronto. She is studying viola with Katharine Rapoport, and her composition teachers have included Canadian composers Alexander Rapoport and Larysa Kuzmenko.